

# Eau Claire Area Master Gardener News



September 2021

## “Diversity of Native Wiscon-Sunflowers.”

by Andy Heren (pictures from Dr. Mitchell’s slides)

On August 16 for a presentation by Dr. Nora Mitchell, assistant professor of Biology at University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire gave a presentation to the Eau Claire Area Master Gardener Volunteers (ECAMGVs) via Zoom.

Her presentation covered 4 points:

Part 1: Sunflowers as a model system

Part 2: How do sunflower traits vary across space?

Part 3: How do sunflower defenses vary with insect damage?

Part 4: Is there evidence for hybridization in Wisconsin sunflowers?

First, a little background. Dr. Mitchell shared the word Sunflower (*Helianthus*) in 2 languages. First the Greek, *Hélios* (Sun) and *ánthos* (flower) Then the Ojibwe word *Ziinda’aagan*. This shows that the sunflower is native to North America.

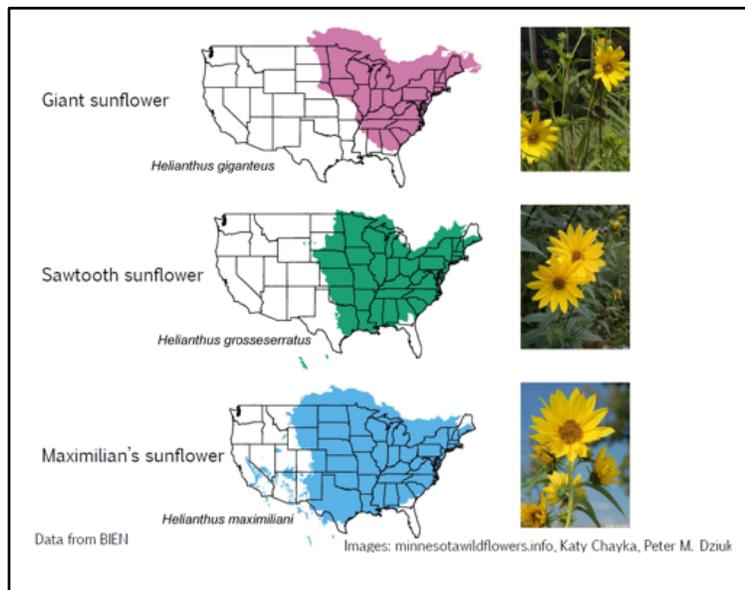
The sunflower family, Asteraceae, contains about 33,000 species. This includes other well-known flowers, such as Asters, Goldenrods, Thistles, Lettuce, Chamomile, Yarrow, Sagebrush, Chickory, Coreopsis, Cosmos, Stevia, Zinnia, Marigold, Dandelion, Sunflower, and many others!

A sunflower is actually a cluster of many small “florets,” or inflorescences. There are approximately 70 species of sunflowers and hybridizations. The sunflowers that we plant in our gardens are the result of hybridization. The seeds are much larger than those of the wild sunflowers.

Sunflowers support many pollinators. Eighty-seven bee species were found on *Helianthus* in one study! Sunflowers were first domesticated 4,000 years ago in eastern North America.

So on to Part 1: Sunflowers as a model system. There are three Wisconsin sunflowers on which Dr. Mitchell’s group focused: Giant Sunflower, Sawtooth, and Maximilian. Of these there are two main traits. There are the “fast” plants which have thin, floppy leaves (high specific leaf area). They “live fast, die young.” Then there are the “slow” plants which have tough, leather leaves (low specific leaf area). For them it

(Continued on page 3)



## The Sunflower Family (Asteraceae)

~33,000 species



Asters  
Goldenrods  
Thistles  
Lettuce  
Chamomile  
Yarrow  
Sagebrush  
Chickory  
Coreopsis  
Cosmos  
Stevia  
Zinnia  
Marigold  
Dandelion  
Sunflower  
Etc.!

Saikat et al. (2014)



## Local Master Gardener News

### Changing e-mail? Moving?

If you do, please remember to notify the ECAMG and the newsletter editor of your new e-mail address and/or mailing address so you don't miss any Eau Claire Area Master Gardener happenings!



Email your new information to Carol Cox at [c7w6c2200@charter.net](mailto:c7w6c2200@charter.net) or notify her by snail mail at 1908 Hogeboom Ave., Eau Claire, WI 54701 (or call her at 715-783-

### ECAMGA Board

#### ECAMGA BOARD MEMBER CONTACT INFO

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MGV

**Bulletin Board  
Postings Stories  
and  
Opportunities!!!**



**Note:**

The ECAMGAV Board minutes may be accessed at <https://www.eauclaireareamastergardener.org>.

### Prairie Positives and Pitfalls

Thinking of a prairie planting? Join us for our next educational meeting via Zoom at 7 pm on September 20. Our speaker, Diana Alfuth, outreach specialist with the UW- Madison Division of Extension Horticulture, will share her experiences with growing a prairie. (Photo by Judy Mitchell)



### ECAMGV

2021 Calendar



September 20: Diana Alfuth on  
Prairie and Natives

**October 7: Deadline for Annual  
Photo Contest**

October 18: Teaching Kids in the  
Garden - Joy Weisner and  
Pam Warren-Armstrong,  
UWEX Foodwise  
Program.

November 22: Dr. Kristina  
Beuning on UWEC  
Greenhouse (in-  
person tour if pandemic  
permits)

December: Annual Meeting and  
Christmas Party

*"I'm a multitasker. I can  
listen, ignore and forget all at  
the same time!"*

*-anonymous*

*Diversity of...continued from page 1...*

is “slow and steady wins the race.”

Part 2: How do sunflower traits vary across space? Dr. Mitchell and two grad students planted sunflowers at two sites, in Cornell and then one on Jeffers Rd at the county line. These native sunflowers are more “weedy” looking than what we associate with sunflowers. They found faster rates in cooler areas, but it is not related to rainfall. She thinks it is related to soil type and the difference in phosphorus. There is a big difference in soils, even in the few miles that separated these two plots.

Part 3: How do sunflower defenses vary with insect damage? They found there is a variation among species, sometimes among growing environments. There was also a group grown in a greenhouse. They wonder if more damage equals increased chemical defenses.

Part 4: Is there evidence for hybridization in Wisconsin sunflowers? Robert Long, in 1960, stated that related species have a most perplexing tendency to fade into one another. Leaves were collected for DNA extraction from 10-20 individuals per population. The DNA was sequenced at a UW Madison facility and was used to assess genetic relatedness. The results found very little evidence in natural populations. Perhaps some historical, now isolated events affected this.

We thank Dr. Mitchell for her time and presentation! I discovered that wild sunflowers are much different than the hybridized versions we are used to seeing. No matter which, though, they are beautiful flowers to be appreciated and enjoyed!

## Menomonie Street MG Project Tour

Article and pictures by Ellen Terwilliger

On August 1, twenty-one people learned about the Menomonie Street Master Gardener (MG) Project. Aruna and Jael, new MG volunteers, shared information about how Invasive species were removed and replaced with native sedges, plants and other shrubs this past year. They worked with MG Ellen Terwilliger on the project (the city land is adjacent to Ellen's property).



After learning about the project visitors also toured Ellen's gardens which includes a native grass and flower area new two years ago. It was interesting to see the progress in such a short period of time. The three MGs maintain a schedule of weeding out any returning False Spirea, Virginia Creeper among other weeds. Visitors viewed a potted collection of weeds to learn about the problematic invasive weeds.

Eau Claire Garden Club members were also among those attending. If you are interested in viewing the project, it is on the corner of Menomonie Street and Mt. Washington Ave.



## **ECAMGVA Standing Committees – Opportunities To Get Involved...**

by Jeannie Chromey and other Board Members

A part of your Eau Claire Area Master Gardener Volunteer Association (ECAMGVA) are the standing committees. This is an area where each and every member has an opportunity to be involved and accumulate some of those needed volunteer hours. As board members we have each accepted responsibility for one of these committees as the liaison between the committee members and the board. Current committees and board connection are as follows:

### **Education – (Judy Mitchell)**

This committee is responsible for arranging speakers, topics, etc. for the monthly educational meetings, the winter gardening seminar, and any special educational events. They also plan garden tours and educational field trips and had to adapt to the pandemic by taking meetings and seminars on-line but look forward to resuming in-person meetings at some point.

If you value the educational benefits of the MGVA program, consider volunteering on the Education Committee. Current committee members are Ellen Terwilliger (chair) and Judy Mitchell. We are looking for one or two additional people and would be delighted to have you work with us to produce quality educational experiences for our members. To get involved contact: Judy Mitchell at [jmitchell@pobox.com](mailto:jmitchell@pobox.com).

### **Communications (Andy Heren)**

The Communications Standing Committee is in charge of notifying ECAMGVA members of news and events. Most of our communications are via email, however, in the past we have also sent postcards for other information, including monthly educational presentations and yearly voting. It will be discussed if we want to continue with the postcards when we are back to meeting in person.

Much of this is done by Andy, by virtue of his position at the Extension office as Administrative Specialist, which makes him assistant to the Horticulture Educator, who oversees/advises our Master Gardener Volunteer program. For more information contact Andy Heren at [Rcktnut007@aol.com](mailto:Rcktnut007@aol.com).

### **Membership Committee (Barb Huggins and Chris Southworth)**

This committee is responsible for recruitment and mentoring of new members, retention of members and for Recruitment for board member nominations. Some of our activities this past year were working with Margaret Murphy on the development of a mentoring program, planning and hosting a mentor/mentee mixer, and planning the Garden Wrap Up which was held in August. Also, we'll soon begin planning a winter holiday party.

Current members are Sue Waits, Louise Roach, Barb Huggins and Chris Southworth. We'd love to have you join our group! For more information contact Chris Southworth - [chris\\_southworth@yahoo.com](mailto:chris_southworth@yahoo.com).

**Finance Committee** (Chris Southworth) this committee is responsible for developing the budget, setting dues and for the annual audit. Do you like numbers? We'll begin work soon on the budget for 2022 and would love a fresh perspective! Are you interested in becoming our in-house auditor? Our current auditor, Jeannie Chromey, has offered to tutor anyone interested in taking over that role. To get involved contact Chris Southworth – [chris\\_southworth@yahoo.com](mailto:chris_southworth@yahoo.com).

### **Project Approval** (Jeannie Chromey)

This committee is responsible for the approval of new projects, review of existing projects and recruiting volunteers to work on projects. While COVID greatly reduced our project work and UW Extension has currently put a hold on new projects, we can still do planning for the future so that post COVID can hit the ground running. In addition, this down time is a great time to evaluate our current and past project list to make sure they align with our goals and UW objectives.

This committee has not been actively staffed in the recent past, but with so many changes and new requirements it is time to get to work. I would welcome anyone interested in doing some "behind the scenes" work with me on this committee. Remember, this is a great way to get those volunteer hours. Please contact me by email at [j\\_chromey@yahoo.com](mailto:j_chromey@yahoo.com)



## Events



Beaver Creek Reserve  
S1 County Road K  
Fall Creek, WI 54742  
715-877-2212

# Annual Meeting



Join us on **Saturday, September 11th** from **5:00-9:00 PM** for our combined Volunteer and Donor Appreciation event and fall Annual Meeting. We will be announcing award winners from the last two years while highlighting all things Beaver Creek Reserve! Please join us in celebrating our friends, volunteers,

and donors with a night filled with nature activities for both kids and adults, music, and good company. [Learn more!](#)

**Order your advance tickets before Sept. 11**, you don't want to miss out on this exciting celebration! See below for more information and ticket prices.

*\*To order tickets, buy them online below, call us at 715-877-2212, or stop by the Wise Nature Center to buy them in-person.*

### Agenda

Check-in at the Wise Nature Center, parking is available at both the North & South Campus.

There will be hors d'oeuvres served throughout the night, and beer, wine, and soda will be available for purchase.

**5:00 - 7:00 p.m.** - Educational Programs & Social Hour - Nature Center  
*Raptors, Macroinvertebrates, Butterflies, and more!*

**7:00 - 8:00 p.m.** - Annual Meeting & Awards Presentation - North Campus

*Kids program led by a BCR naturalist at this time.*

**8:00 - 9:00 p.m.** - Social Hour & More Programs!  
*Night Hike, Astronomy Program, and Campfire Stories.*

### Tickets

- \$15 per adult (before Sept. 11)
- \$7 per youth (ages 2-15)
- \$17 per adult (day of event)

*\*Children under 2 are FREE!*

**Order now!**



There will also be live music throughout the night. Mario and Sherry Friedel from the band, [Songa Trio](#), will be joining us this evening to perform various folk, country, bluegrass, blues, country rock and jazz pieces.

***Reminder! Take those photos for entry in the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual ECAMGVA***



*Contest deadline is October 8, 2021. For full rules and information go to the July 2021 issue of the newsletter (page 3)*



*Picture by Carol Cox*

With the arrival of fall we still look for color in our gardens. This combo of Russian Sage, Autumn Joy Sedum, rudbeckia, and silver sage makes a lovely combination and gives both color and contrast.



## Bits and Pieces



*Picture provided by Frankie Weinberger*

## Year-Round Edible Gardening

by Frankie Weinberger

Wisconsin has an amazing four-season climate that provides a rich variety of activities unique to each season. That is great news for those who enjoy such a wide array of recreational choices.

However, it's not the best news if you grow edible crops as a major part of your diet - when it comes to fall and winter, the "non-gardening months" from November through April. Canning and freezing can supply numerous fruits and vegetables throughout that time period, but many vegetables are ideally eaten fresh.

Although far from being an expert on the subject, I am very hopeful that I will have beginner's luck in my new adventure transitioning to year-round edible gardening in 2021. My guidebook and inspiration are from a book entitled The Year-Round Vegetable Gardener by Niki Jabbour near Halifax, Nova Scotia. Although coastal Nova Scotia's close proximity to the Atlantic provides a slightly warmer climate and higher growing zone of 5a, the thought that year-round vegetable gardening can be done in Canada made it seem possible to do so in Wisconsin.

Some of the main techniques that can be used to enable year-round vegetable gardening include cold frames, mini hoop tunnels, and greenhouses. Each "layer" of protection yields 1 step gain in growing zone, so using a cold frame or mini hoop tunnel will turn zone 4 into zone 5. If two "layers" are used, such as a cold frame within a mini hoop tunnel or unheated greenhouse, 2 steps are gained in growing zones, and zone 4 now becomes zone 6. This opens up new possibilities of vegetables that be grown.

Cold frames can be ordered or constructed fairly easily and are often made out of cedar. The cold frames can be surrounded with bags of leaves or bales of straw for extra insulation, and they can occasionally be covered with blankets during very cold periods. Another option is to construct a cold frame for taller crops made with straw bales covered with hard polycarbonate.

Mini hoop tunnels consist of hoops such as PVC pipes covered with floating row covers in mid-fall and then greenhouse plastic as temperatures drop further. Covers need to be secured carefully to prevent wind gusts from opening them.

This year I will be starting with two 2' x 8' cedar cold frames and mini hoop tunnels. One cold frame is already planted with beets, carrots, and green onions on one half, and two varieties of cold hardy field salad (often called "mache") and chervil in the other half. The second cold frame will be planted in mid-September, and will contain multiple salad greens like arugula, claytonia, endive, field salad, mibuna, mizuna and tatsoi. The mini hoop tunnels will cover the cold frames, and also have sections covered raised beds with herbs (chives, cilantro, parsley, oregano and thyme) and vegetables (kale, leek, turnips). Perhaps a small unheated greenhouse will eventually be my next investment in the next year or two.

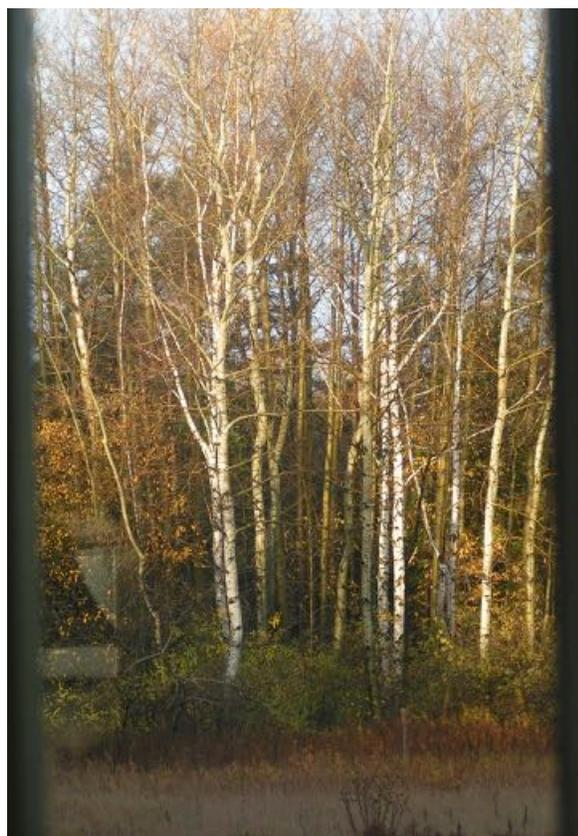
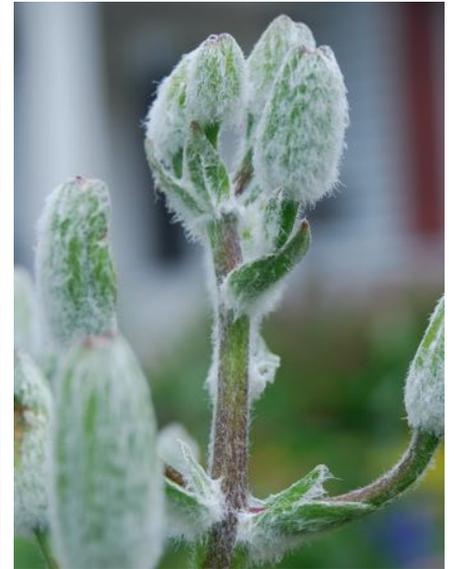
In her book, Niki Jabbour presents well-organized directions for growing each vegetable and herb. It is a fascinating, informative and motivating book. Not only do her year-round gardening techniques provide fresh produce, but she also introduces cold hardy salad greens that are unfamiliar to many – like claytonia, field salad, mibuna and mizuna. It is well worth reading and considering a new adventure of year-round vegetable gardening!



**EYE CANDY**

Photos on this page – the good ones taken by Dana Cox, the not so good by Carol Cox. Photos below going clockwise: Late summer planting of grass and rudbeckia; Clivia in bloom, the buds of a unique Asiatic lily (they are always fuzzy – this is not some malady); castor bean; (below castor bean) yellow calla lily; Door County birch clump on a fall morning; and, above the pig pun, a variegated sedum.

“Losing weight doesn't seem to be working for me, so from now I'm going to concentrate on getting taller.” – anonymous



**WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN YOU PICK A PIG'S NOSE?**



**HAM BOOGERS  
I KNOW, I KNOW...SNOT FUNNY**

*(Editor: ...but my weird, juvenile sense of humor just could not resist...)  
Found someplace???*





D. H. Lawrence, 'Piano'.

*In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song  
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong  
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside  
And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide ...*

While D. H. Lawrence's poem 'Piano' is recalling his childhood when he listened to his mother playing the piano, as Master Gardeners, we can also look back to the "olden days" and some of our past achievements. Here in a picture, I think taken by Jo-Ann Clark, is the lovely gardens developed by the MGs out at the old Expo Center.

Unless otherwise noted, articles for this newsletter are submitted and/or written by ECAMGA members or the newsletter editor, Carol W. Cox. Unless otherwise noted, graphics are from clipart. Newsletter layout by Carol W. Cox



For more Eau Claire County UW Cooperative Extension information go to our website:

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M-F 8AM-5PM



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